

Boy's needs will be addressed Universities to offer prodigy extra services

Nora Tong

Universities to which nine-year-old prodigy March Boedihardjo has applied say they will provide counselling and services to cater for his needs if he is admitted.

But concerns have been raised about whether university enrolment is the sole option for March, who learned his A-level results yesterday – two As, in mathematics and further mathematics, and a B in statistics.

March has applied to Baptist University, Chinese University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and the University of Hong Kong. No admission decision has been made.

His father, Tony Boedihardjo, said: "Going to university is the only choice."

He said he and his son would be really happy if he went to university, and they had not made other plans.

Sun Kwok, dean of science at HKU, said the university as a whole – and not just the science faculty and mathematics department – would have to support March if he were accepted. Colleagues involved in counselling and student affairs would have to be involved, he said.

"The university will have made the commitment," Professor Kwok said, and would have facilities and manpower available if it decides to admit him.

In deciding whether to offer March a place, HKU registrar Henry Wai Wing-kun said it would pit him against students who had taken General Certificate of Education A-levels and the International Baccalaureate.

This year, students enrolling in the science faculty who are admitted through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System achieved an average of two As and one B in A-levels.

Fan Yiu-kwan, vice-president for development at Baptist University, said March was a special case and required special arrangements.

The university would provide an environment conducive to learning for him, including services provided by its child development centre, he said.

Apart from offering academic mentoring, Ng Tai-kai, associate dean of science at HKUST, said the university would help March in his growth and development.

March has been interviewed twice by the university, and Professor Ng said he was confident in the child's academic ability.

Problems related to the child's everyday life, he said, such as whether or not a room should be built for March to have rest periods, could be resolved relatively easily.

"The concern is whether we will be able to advise him on what to do in future," Professor Ng said. "What is he going to do after he graduates? University enrolment is not the only way to develop his potential."

Chan Pui-tin, curriculum development officer for gifted education at the Education Bureau, said universities should provide mentoring and counselling to March.

He said the boy could be referred to a primary or secondary school and be enrolled in a government-run programme for exceptionally gifted students from Form Three or above. These students go to normal schools while attending special, often university-level, courses in areas in which they are talented.

ESF schools hail A-level results



Lorraine Ma (left) is hugged by Rachel Ng as she reviews her A-level results. Ms Ma, who wants to study medicine, received six As. Photo: Edward Wong

Will Clem

There were tears of joy and desperation yesterday as hundreds of students at international and ESF schools received their results in the British A-level examinations.

Lorraine Ma Wai-yan, 18, jumped up and down with joy when she discovered she was one of two students from South Island School who had scored six As.

"I want to study medicine at the University of Hong Kong, but they wanted me to get an average of over 90 per cent in four subjects," she said.

"I am so happy that I got what I needed. I've saved my mother a lot of money because I won't need to study overseas."

But there was room for improve-

ment even among some of the happier students.

"I got one B in one module," said Eugene Lui Yik-hei, 18, as he inspected an otherwise flawless results slip.

Nonetheless, he said he felt euphoric to have done so well. "After two years' hard work, it all comes down to that one moment," he said.

The ESF, which had nearly 500 students sitting the exams this year in four of its seven secondary schools, hailed this year's results as the foundation's "best A-level results to date".

Jane Foxcroft, principal of the ESF's West Island School, said its students had done "amazingly". "Nineteen per cent of our 124 A-level students scored an A in three or more subjects," she said.

About 100 Year 12 and Year 13 stu-

dents at German Swiss International School sat A-levels and AS-levels.

Mary Peart, head of the school's English section, said school officials were delighted with this year's results. The school's students had received a pass rate of 100 per cent at A-level and 98 per cent at AS-level.

"They are good students, but these results are absolutely fantastic by any stretch of the imagination," she said.

But there was frustration for some students whose marks were not as good as expected, or whose results slips were incomplete.

"I hate Edexcel," said one aggravated student at South Island School after he discovered that the examinations body had marked some of his subjects as "result pending".

Nine students at Korean International School sat the exams, but a spokesman said the school was not able to break down the results.

Students at Sear Rogers International School in Mid-Levels also sat the exams, but a spokeswoman said no results were available yet.

The number of Hong Kong students sitting British A-levels is set to drop dramatically next year when all ESF secondary schools switch to the International Baccalaureate diploma, currently offered at Sha Tin College and Renaissance College.

"I think we would get through it, but it would definitely be harder," said Jacqueline Fok Hoi-lam, 18, a four-As student at West Island School. "It is really all down to your study skills and how hard you work."

Star pupil makes an impact with college staff

Nearly everyone from Greene's Tutorial College in Oxford knows March Boedihardjo. From the school director to the receptionist and tutors who did not teach the boy, March is known as the child who is "good for mathematics".

"He is a bright boy ... and cheerful," said Jonathan Christie, academic registrar at the college where the prodigy spent two years in Britain preparing for public exams including A-levels and GCSEs. "He is a capable student [who is] good at maths."

"March is one of the youngest students we had," Mr Christie said, adding that it was remarkable that the boy used only one year to finish his A-levels, which usually takes two years.

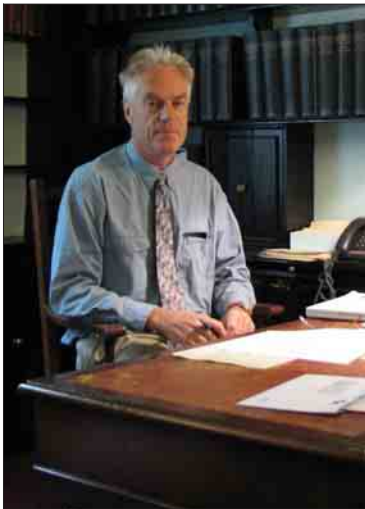
"It is not normal [to have such a young student taking A-levels]. But we don't judge students by age or ability."

Heather Argyle, administrator at the college, said: "He seems to be enjoying his studies. Every time I saw him, he talked about maths."

Located in Pembroke Street near Christ Church College in Oxford, the private tutorial college looks more like a traditional English house with fireplaces in almost every classroom.



Greene's Tutorial College and registrar



Jonathan Christie. Photo: Paggie Leung

The classroom in which March spent about 10 to 12 hours a week for his tutorial lessons is on the top floor of the three-storey building. The red-carpeted room, which measures about 110 sq ft, contains a few wooden tables and other furniture.

The school says March was taught by about seven tutors during his two

years of study in Oxford. College director Christopher Upton said March's mathematics teacher, who has taught at the school since the 1970s, was an experienced mathematician.

Mr Upton said March was given homework after every tutorial and the tutor would go through it step by step at the next meeting. Tutors wrote

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Jonathan Christie, academic registrar, Greene's College

reports about March's performance, effort in class and homework after every class.

Opened in the late 1960s, the school takes pupils of any level. The tuition fee is £45 (HK\$700) per hour, up from £44 last year.

Paggie Leung in Oxford

City Digest

Health Care

Dentist's behaviour 'seriously improper'

A tribunal investigating the conduct of a dentist accused of delegating dental work to his nurses yesterday found his behaviour "seriously improper". Dentist Peter Chung Chee-keung also failed in a bid to be reinstated on the dental register after his removal for an earlier, similar infraction. The Dental Council substantiated the allegation that Dr Chung had let his nurses adjust and fit braces on a patient, and concluded that he "lacked insight into his own conduct". His removal from the registry has prevented him from practising since February last year. The latest complaint was lodged by Lai Lai-yung and her daughter, Leung Hin-ting.

Traffic

Road rage blocks ambulance

A man whose car was hit by an ambulance took drastic action to block the emergency vehicle, which was ferrying an elderly Wong Tai Sin woman to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The ambulance driver had not noticed the minor collision, in which one of the car's mirrors was broken, and continued on his journey, a Fire Services Department spokesman said. He called police when his route was then blocked by the enraged motorist on Prince Edward Road West at about 10am. Another ambulance took the woman, in her 70s and suffering from leg pains, to hospital. Her ride lasted about 30 minutes longer than expected. Danny Mok

Crime



Domestic helper to go home

It is the end of the road for domestic helper Preslyn-saga Catacutan, who leaves Hong Kong tomorrow after deciding not to appeal against a conviction for stealing photographs and a letter from Canto-pop singer Jacky Cheung Hok-yau. On August 8 in the Court of First Instance, Mrs Justice Verina Bokhary rejected Catacutan's appeal to set aside her conviction last year, but reduced the sentence from six months to three. Catacutan had spent seven weeks in prison when she was released on January 29 pending the appeal. Mary Ann Benitez

